

There are a growing number of reports from North Korea refugees that any unauthorized religious activity inside North Korea is met with arrest, imprisonment, torture, and sometimes execution by North Korean officials."

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of State's 2005 Country Report on Human Rights Practices sums up North Korea's actions by listing documented or alleged human rights abuses over the years. Such instances include: abridgement of the right to change the government; extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and arbitrary detention, including many political prisoners; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; torture; forced abortions and infanticide in prisons; lack of an independent judiciary and fair trials; denial of freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; government attempts to control all information; denial of freedom of religion, freedom of movement, and worker rights; and severe punishment of some repatriated refugees.

I also want to note President Bush's appointment last August of Ambassador Jay Lefkowitz to the position of Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea. The Special Envoy post was established under the North Korea Human Rights Act, and with this appointment, signaled the administration's intensified attention to human rights in North Korea. I am confident that Ambassador Lefkowitz will continue to take steps toward ending North Korea's suppression of freedoms.

As we in the Senate continue to address the persecution and the fears that North Koreans face, it is my hope that we will do all we can in order to improve the conditions in this communist state and to spread the freedoms that we all enjoy.

DARFUR

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, Elie Wiesel once told us that "a destruction, an annihilation that only man can provoke, only man can prevent." Our American heritage calls upon each of us to stand up, to speak out, and to act when we witness human rights abuses. As a global leader, the United States has a special and solemn obligation. We must live up to this responsibility.

This week marked both Armenian Remembrance Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day. In the final years of the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923, the world witnessed the mass killing of as many as 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children. Five-hundred thousand survivors were expelled from their homes. Our U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau organized and led protests by foreign officials against one of the most horrible tragedies of the 20th century.

Sadly and almost unimaginably, more human devastation followed. Later years witnessed the Holocaust—

the Nazis' systematic state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million Jews. In 1945, the U.S. Third Army's 6th Armored Division liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp and the U.S. Seventh Army's 45th Infantry Division liberated Dachau in Germany.

We reflect in order to remember—honoring the dead, pledging never to forget atrocities of the past, and fighting to stop them today. In 2004, then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell told the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee that genocide has been committed in the Sudanese region of Darfur. A consistent, widespread, and terrible pattern of atrocities and burning of villages continues as the situation in Darfur remains grim. I believe the U.S. must lead urgent international efforts to stop the killing in Darfur. We must act immediately, working with the United Nations, NATO, and the African Union to stop the ongoing violence. We must remain focused and never waver in our fight to bring an end to the genocide.

2006 NATIONAL PARK WEEK

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I think each of us enjoy walking on a trail, learning a little more about our Nation's history, or perhaps paddling a canoe on a lake, river, or stream. Often we take part in these activities in our national parks. This week, April 22 to April 30, is National Park Week, a time when we can recognize all of the 390 units of the National Park System. There will be special events going on at parks throughout the system, and I encourage everyone to seek them out and take part in them.

As I have mentioned before, I have a special attachment to Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, located in Wyoming, my home State. But Yellowstone, Grand Teton National Park, the other National Park System units in Wyoming, and those across the Nation, extending from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to Guam and American Samoa, all remind us of ourselves, where we have been, and perhaps where we will go in the future. They have been called by others the best idea we ever had.

America's national parks provide people of all ages with a wide range of opportunities to learn more about our country's natural environment and cultural heritage. The National Park Service provides a variety of programs and activities for children, teachers, and communities designed to foster an interest in the natural environment and history and to cultivate a future generation of park stewards.

The theme for National Park Week 2006 is "Connecting Our Children to America's National Parks." This theme was chosen because of the vital role children play in the future conservation and preservation of our national parks.

Through the creation of innovative education programs such as the Junior

Ranger Program, the National Park Service is fostering a new constituency of park stewards. Today the Junior Ranger Program exists in more than 286 parks, striving to help connect youth to national parks and the National Park System and helping them gain an understanding of the important role of the environment in our lives.

The Junior Ranger Program encourages whole families to get involved in learning about, exploring and protecting our Nation's most important scenic, historical, and cultural places. Children have great enthusiasm for the Junior Ranger Program because it helps connect them to something big our country and our shared heritage as Americans. Additionally, online through WebRangers, kids can "virtually" visit the parks at their own pace in their spare time and when they are not in the parks. In fact, one of the events that will take place this year during National Park Week is a virtual, shared visit to Carlsbad Caverns National Park, which could involve more than 28 million students.

Of course, our visits to parks are enhanced through the interaction we receive from the people who work in them. During this week, we should also thank the thousands of National Park Service personnel, concession and contract employees, volunteers of all ages, and others who help to make our system of national parks the envy of and example for the rest of the world.

As the chair of the National Parks Subcommittee, I will continue to see that our system of parks retains its high standards. I would encourage each of you to spend some time in a national park unit, this week and throughout the year.

SECURING AMERICA'S ENERGY INDEPENDENCE ACT

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Securing America's Energy Independence Act of 2006. This bill is designed to extend the investment tax credits for fuel cells and solar energy systems in the 2005 Energy Policy Act through 2015.

Having reliable, clean energy is fundamental to economic prosperity, our national security, and protecting the environment. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 encourages homeowners and businesses to invest in solar energy and fuel cell technologies through investment tax credits. That law established a tax credit of 30 percent for investments in fuel cells, capped at \$1,000, and a tax credit of 30 percent for investments in solar systems, capped at \$2,000.

However, these credits will expire after 2 years, and therefore are too short lived to encourage significant market penetration or to stimulate expansion of manufacturing for solar energy or fuel cell technologies. Installations of solar energy or fuel cell systems require lead times of a year or more, and manufacturing expansion requires a development schedule of 3 to 4

years, similar to conventional powerplants. Financing of new projects is also more complex than for conventional powerplants because the lending industry is less familiar with these technologies.

Accordingly, I have proposed to extend the tax credits for an additional 8 years. My legislation also would alter the cap on residential solar credits to be based on system power, as opposed to cost, and would allow the credits to be taken against the alternative minimum tax.

As the market for fuel cell and solar technologies continues to grow overseas, long-term incentives are an essential tool to spur domestic investment and job creation. Extending these incentives for residential and business investments in fuel cell and solar energy technologies will generate quality American jobs in manufacturing, construction, and installation across the United States.

Our legislation addresses energy independence and environmental concerns, as well as job creation, with the power of American technology and ingenuity. I am pleased that Senators MENENDEZ, LIEBERMAN, SNOWE, JEFFORDS, KERRY, CANTWELL, SALAZAR, and CLINTON have joined me as original cosponsors of this legislation. In light of increasing concerns about the security and affordability of energy supplies, I urge favorable consideration of this bill.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JOAN LESLIE

• Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Joan Leslie, a talented actress who served as a source of comfort and inspiration to millions of Americans during World War II. On May 14, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Connecticut will pay tribute to Ms. Leslie for her tireless devotion to our Nation's servicemen with a gala in her honor.

Born Joan Agnes Theresa Sadie Bordel on January 26, 1925, in Detroit, MI, Ms. Leslie made her professional debut at age nine. As a child she worked as a model and performed a song and dance routine with her two sisters before she got her big break in 1940 when she signed with Warner Brothers.

Joan Leslie shared the screen with many of the leading actors of her time, starring with Humphrey Bogart in "High Sierra," Gary Cooper in "Sergeant York," and James Cagney in "Yankee Doodle Dandy." In 1943, she became Fred Astaire's youngest dance partner, celebrating her 18th birthday on the set of "The Sky's the Limit." Through these roles, Joan Leslie became known as America's quintessential "girl next door."

As Ms. Leslie's popularity escalated, so did America's involvement in World War II. Americans found themselves

turning to entertainers like Joan Leslie for reassurance about the goodness and strength of our country amid the tremendous stresses and burdens of war. Tens of thousands of American servicemen clung to Joan Leslie's picture as a reminder of the values they were fighting for and the loved ones they left behind. Ms. Leslie willingly accepted the responsibility of her role, taking it upon herself to visit the troops at defense plants and Army bases. Joan Leslie and other entertainers like her played a pivotal role in the overall war effort, serving as a source of comfort and inspiration for American soldiers and the rest of the country. Ultimately, they served as a reassurance that our Nation would prevail.

It is only right that veterans of our Nation should honor entertainers like Joan Leslie, and I take particular pride in the fact that the veterans of Connecticut have taken a leadership role in her tribute. Ms. Leslie not only filled the role of the girl next door on the movie screen, but carried it into her personal life, as well. Her life lives up to her reputation, which is a rare achievement for a public figure. Perhaps her greatest accomplishments have occurred outside the public eye, as she has dedicated most of her life to raising her identical twin daughters, Patrice and Ellen, with her husband, Dr. William Caldwell.

Joan Leslie served as a pillar of strength when America needed her most. She deserves the thanks of a grateful Nation for a life of service. I commend her for her continued dedication to American servicemen, and congratulate her, her husband, her children, and her other family members on this wonderful occasion. •

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:08 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 282. An act to hold the current regime in Iran accountable for its threatening behavior and to support a transition to democracy in Iran.

H.R. 5020. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 365. An act urging the Government of China to reinstate all licenses of Gao Zhisheng and his law firm, remove all legal and political obstacles for lawyers attempting to defend criminal cases in China, including politically sensitive cases, and revise law and practice in China so that it conforms to international standards.

ENROLLED BILL AND JOINT RESOLUTION SIGNED

The message further announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill and joint resolution:

S. 592. An act to amend the Irrigation Project Contract Extension Act of 1998 to extend certain contracts between the Bureau of Reclamation and certain irrigation water contractors in the States of Wyoming and Nebraska.

S.J. Res. 28. An act approving the location of the commemorative work in the District of Columbia honoring former President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The enrolled bill and joint resolution were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 282. An act to hold the current regime in Iran accountable for its threatening behavior and to support a transition to democracy in Iran; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

The following concurrent resolution was read, and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 365. Concurrent resolution urging the Government of China to reinstate all licenses of Gao Zhisheng and his law firm, remove all legal and political obstacles for lawyers attempting to defend criminal cases in China, including politically sensitive cases, and revise law and practice in China so that it conforms to international standards; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

H.R. 5020. An act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, the Community Management Account, and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL AND JOINT RESOLUTION PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on April 27, 2006, she had presented to the President of the United States